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THE SAUDI-PAKISTANI MILITARY RELATIONSHIP  
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR US STRATEGY  
IN SOUTHWEST ASIA

SPECIAL REPORT



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by

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and

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## FOREWORD

This special report considers the strategic value of a closer military relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. A common approach to the defense problems of Southwest Asia (SWA) by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan impinges on US strategy in that region where declared US policy seeks to enhance security. The authors examine the historical background and impact of the emerging Saudi-Pakistani military relationships in terms of its regional significance and in terms of the implications it holds for US strategy in SWA within the context of the requirements of peace, crisis, and war. Specifically, this special report analyzes a military relationship between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan that would involve Pakistan stationing combat troops in Saudi Arabia in return for some level of modernization of the Pakistani armed forces, using Saudi money to purchase modern US military weapon systems. The authors conclude that such a regional security relationship would, on balance, contain great strategic benefits not only for Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, but for the United States as well.

This special report was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the Army War College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.

  
KEITH A. BARLOW  
Colonel

Director, Strategic Studies Institute

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#### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE AUTHORS

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## SUMMARY

The emerging security relationship between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan is examined first in its regional historical context and secondly in terms of the strategic implications it holds for the United States. This special report suggests that if the Pakistanis were to station up to two combat divisions in Saudi Arabia to shore up the defense establishment there, the effect on US national interests in Southwest Asia would be salutary. The relationship would certainly be advantageous to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan reaps military, political, and psychological benefits as well. In the short term, the enhanced regional stability that would accrue from such a relationship would afford the United States and its allies access to needed oil, but in the long run, US interests might be better served by nonmilitary means. The extreme vulnerability of the oil fields and the great difficulty of restoring them to operation once damaged points to a preferred policy of oil independence. But until that policy can come to fruition, the United States in peace, crisis, and war must be prepared to respond with military forces.

In a military context, the deterrent effect of the unfolding Saudi-Pakistani security relationship on regional wars on the Arabian Peninsula would be considerable and it provides the United States with military help in the protection of Saudi oil and military installations should the United States be asked to provide military assistance to Saudi Arabia. The Pakistanis are professional soldiers who should be able to increase the military capability of the Saudis. While the Pakistanis would stiffen the Saudi defense during war, the emerging relationship holds greater significance for regional stability through its deterrent effect during peacetime.

THE SAUDI-PAKISTANI MILITARY RELATIONSHIP AND ITS  
IMPLICATIONS FOR US STRATEGY IN SOUTHWEST ASIA

Common perceptions of threat have historically been instrumental in the formation of military alliances among nations. In recent months, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, aware of their shared insecurity, have been moving to create a sense of security by working towards a military relationship. The national security weaknesses of one party is complemented by the strengths of the other. Specifically, Saudi Arabia with its gigantic economic power in the form of oil revenues is heavily deficient in the trained military manpower and martial spirit necessary to protect itself from internal as well as external threats. The Pakistani armed forces--"the soldiers of Islam"--are first rate fighters, but are constrained by the lack of modern and sophisticated weaponry, as well as a need for a reliable source of income with which to underwrite military modernization.

This mutuality of need has spurred Riyadh and Islamabad to seek an agreement for military cooperation. While the precise nature of the unfolding relationship is not completely clear, media estimates range from Pakistan providing Saudi Arabia with a single army brigade or up to as many as two combat divisions, in return for some level of modernization of the Pakistani armed forces, using Saudi money to purchase modern US military weapon systems. Although the essence of the relationship revolves around the simple fact of an exchange of Saudi money for Pakistani military manpower, to put it in such stark mercenary terms is to underrate the impact of the Islamic tradition on these two countries.

A common approach to the defense problems of Southwest Asia (SWA) by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan impinges on US strategy in that region where declared US policy seeks to enhance security. The Carter Doctrine, unveiled on January 21, 1980, explicitly committed the United States to protect its vital interests in SWA, which means the uninterrupted flow of oil and open sea lines of communication (SLOC's). Regional stability (particularly of Saudi Arabia) is an integral part of this policy. This paper examines the background and impact of the emerging Saudi-Pakistani military relationships in terms of its regional significance and in terms of the implications it holds for US strategy in SWA within the context of the requirements of peace, crisis, and war.

## I

Although the events after 1978 were the catalyst for the rapidly increasing military cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, certain collaborative efforts had already preceded that year. A brief recounting of the earlier developments is necessary in order to put more recent events into perspective.

Saudi concern with the development of a modern and effective military establishment came late by Pakistani standards. When initial contacts by Saudi Arabia for potential Pakistani help were made around 1963, Pakistan's military confidence was high. While deficient in modern weapons, Pakistan's defense effort was considerable--since the early 1950's, military expenditures had averaged nearly 50 percent of its annual budget.<sup>1</sup> Only after the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War and the resultant US arms embargo did Pakistan seriously look for alternate sources of support. The two superpowers then became one part of a policy whose other components were the cultivation of such middle level but critical powers such as China, and important Muslim countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. In Saudi eyes, Pakistani performance against a qualitatively as well as numerically superior Indian army was impressive. Contacts were once again renewed and in 1967 the two



countries agreed on cooperation which resulted in a small number (less than 100 initially) of Pakistani military officers being sent to Saudi Arabia to oversee the development of the Saudi army and air force. These "advisors," however, were sent under contract only for a limited period of time.

After the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War, although Pakistan continued its wary watch of India to its east, it made a psychological shift towards the countries to its west. The chief motivating force was more than a mere search for economic resources. It was a desire to assert the Islamic roots which were the underpinning of Pakistani ideology and the rationale for its separation from India in 1947. Consequently, the cultivation of closer relations with Islamic nations were amply rewarded when the quadrupling of oil prices in October 1973 gave the oil producers economic, as well as political clout. Saudi Arabia, in particular, with one-quarter of the free world's proven oil reserves,<sup>2</sup> not only acquired great political prominence as enhanced revenues strengthened its economic hand, but it also became a prime target. With these developments, a mutuality of needs surfaced between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan which made it desirable to establish closer ties.

Thus, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, which had hitherto concentrated only on countering radical Arab politics, shifted to an activist role whereby it vigorously sought to bolster regimes in countries of interest.<sup>3</sup> An important element of this new activist policy was aid to Pakistan, which in 1976 alone, amounted to over \$500 million or 24.8 percent of total Saudi aid. This total surpassed Saudi assistance to other countries, including Egypt.<sup>4</sup>

## II

The unfolding of the Iranian revolution in 1978 drastically changed the security picture for both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The fall of the Shah destroyed the Iranian role as policeman of the Persian Gulf, and raised the specter of the export of the Iranian style revolution to other monarchies in the area. From 1974 to

1978, Saudi "dollar diplomacy" had complemented the Iranian security role in the Gulf area.<sup>5</sup> Both aspects had served American regional interests and had been endorsed by Washington, therefore, it was hard for the Saudis to comprehend US indecision and inaction in preventing the Shah's fall and in its encouragement of his flight from Iran. Washington seemed to forget that the Shah was the quint-essence of the Nixon Doctrine. Given the West's vital need for oil, the Shah's regional role had allowed the United States the luxury of a lower profile in SWA than would have been possible without him. For a decade, the United States was able to escape the burden of its responsibility in SWA. But the entire edifice of American policy was built on the survivability of one man. The termination of the Shah's regime in January 1979, followed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, heightened US sensitivities to threats to Western oil interests.

The Iranian revolution also troubled Pakistan. It had accepted, although with considerably circumscribed enthusiasm, the Shah as the protector of Pakistani security. His departure left Pakistan exposed, particularly as Khomeini was prone to periodically call upon the Pakistani public (which was construed in Islamabad to mean the Shia population) to rise up and overthrow the Zia government. Although official relations were cordial and the Pakistani Foreign Minister had several audiences with Khomeini, an element of unpredictability remained in the relationship.

The success of the Marxist coup in Kabul in April 1978 followed the Iranian revolution and reinforced the twin pillars of Saudi-Pakistani strategy. That is, the presence of one pillar which can be labeled as "reactive," conditioned by their joint perception of an external threat tied (directly or indirectly) to the Soviet Union. Another, which can be labeled as "active," sought to build the positive trends, such as the search for an Islamic consensus. Both strategies had their roots in the Saudi-Pakistani perceptions of the external threat. Saudi Arabia had warily watched Soviet inroads into the Horn of Africa. Moscow's involvement in

Ethiopia, concomitantly with its privileged position in South Yemen (PDRY), made the Saudis extremely nervous. When taken in conjunction with the view that Moscow perceived the Yemenis as "a key to the future of the peninsula,"<sup>6</sup> the potential for trouble seemed particularly acute. Involvement of PDRY in Oman, as well as North Yemen, were the first indications of the "ripple effect" from the Iranian revolution.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the Saudi response was to embark on a two-track policy of calling on Washington's help while working for conciliation amongst the various Arab parties.<sup>8</sup>

The visit of Defense Secretary Harold Brown to Saudi Arabia in February 1979 brought results in Washington's willingness to supply \$139 million in arms to North Yemen financed by Saudi Arabia. An additional \$400 million in immediate aid to North Yemen were pledged by President Carter on the grounds that such action was in the US national interest.<sup>9</sup>

Saudi fears of domestic disturbances within the Kingdom were realized in two incidents in 1979. The first, known as the "Mecca Incident," occurred when a group of religious zealots infiltrated and occupied the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Because the attack occurred in one of Islam's holiest places, the use of military force had to be limited and controlled. Saudi security forces, who were reportedly helped by the French, took two weeks to defeat the rebels. While not confirmed by official sources, accounts of South Yemeni complicity in the training of the rebels were widely circulated. The second episode took place in the eastern province amongst the predominantly Shia population, who seem to have been affected by events in Iran.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, domestic difficulties in Pakistan had international overtones. Rumors of American collusion in the Mecca Incident, broadcast via Teheran to Pakistan, led angry mobs to set fire to the American Embassy in Islamabad.<sup>11</sup> This incident, following hard on the heels of a confrontation over the nuclear issue, plummeted

US-Pakistani relations to another low. Despite statements by the Carter Administration that the Pakistani government was not at fault, doubts continued to persist on this score.

The USSR's move into Afghanistan convinced both the Saudis and Pakistanis that there was a Soviet grand design for the region. To the Saudis it appeared as the culmination of a series of Soviet instigated moves to expand their control. For their part, the Pakistanis felt directly threatened as a "front-line" state. The joint response of both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan was to fall back on the twin pillars they had continued building since 1978. That is, they would counter Soviet moves by seeking guarantees from the United States to bolster the defense of SWA and also to activate the Islamic nations. At a meeting in Islamabad in January 1980, Islamic Foreign Ministers resolutely condemned the Soviet invasion, branding it aggression against a Muslim state.<sup>12</sup> But both nations found it difficult to embrace the United States fully in any concerted anti-Soviet policy. This difficulty was the result of domestic sensitivity to the perceived American culpability in Israel's continued occupation of Arab lands, to the absence of any resolution of the Palestinian problem and to the liabilities of close collaboration with the USA a'la the Shah.

General Zia, in August 1980, stated that Soviet actions in Afghanistan posed a severe threat to Pakistan. According to the Pakistani President: "The battle for Pakistan will be fought in Afghanistan."<sup>13</sup> Given Zia's belief, it became necessary for Pakistan to keep up diplomatic pressure on the Soviets. The Islamic Conference and the United Nations provided useful forums for publicizing the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

Saudi vulnerability was further heightened by the start of the Iran-Iraq War in September 1980. Although Moscow was a party to a "Friendship Treaty" with Baghdad, its official position in this conflict was stated to be that of a "neutral." This would be consistent with the view that the Soviets believed they would not benefit

from the war.<sup>14</sup> If the Soviets were worried that the continuation of the war would lead to a more active US policy, their fears were undoubtedly fed with the dispatch by the United States of AWACS to Saudi Arabia. Moreover, there was a risk of even greater American involvement and continued development of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). These American actions were, in Moscow's official view, unnecessary because, as Brezhnev claimed in New Delhi, the Soviet Union had in his words "no intention of encroaching upon either Middle East oil or its transportation route."<sup>15</sup>

### III

Given this background of insecurity, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan reviewed their combined efforts to enhance their defense capabilities. The Saudis felt vulnerable to both internal and external upheavals. In the words of one analyst: "Blessed with the greatest wealth, they have developed the weakest militia to guard it."<sup>16</sup> Lacking manpower, as well as any military tradition, the Saudis decided that the retention of the "American option" in Saudi defense was critically important.<sup>17</sup> This relationship was mutually beneficial because US security concerns in SWA were predicated on a stable Saudi Arabia.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Saudi perceptions of increased vulnerability, coupled with its sense of threat, meshed with Pakistan's insecurity in the presence of the Soviet move into Afghanistan which for the first time in Pakistan's history opened up the possibility of a two-front war. Pakistan had the necessary trained manpower, but its general military preparedness was adversely affected by obsolete arms and an empty treasury. As a scholar of South Asian strategic affairs has noted: "The South Asian security system is an insecurity system, and the trade-offs for each regional government involve minimizing insecurity, not maximizing security."<sup>19</sup> Developing a military relationship with Pakistan offered Saudi Arabia an intermediate option between their own limited manpower and the full force of a US response.

In this context, a military relationship with Saudi Arabia offered Pakistan not only economic benefits and military material assistance, but, equally important, it gave Pakistan a psychological shift towards its Islamic roots. It also bought a modicum of security for Pakistan by taking the perceived threats from the Soviet Union and India outside its South Asian setting.

Islamabad was well aware of the US commitment to Saudi Arabia. For example, former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance had publicly stated that: "We consider the territorial integrity and security of Saudi Arabia a matter of fundamental interest to the United States."<sup>20</sup> A Saudi-Pakistani link, then, might expand the American Saudi commitment, either implicitly or explicitly to the defense of Pakistan. Additionally, the emerging bilateral relationship offered a chance of a regional response to domestic and international crises where US involvement was either not warranted or was a liability. It also put to rest sentiments that: "One cannot conceive that any other country (except the United States) would go to the aid of Saudi Arabia."<sup>21</sup>

While specific arrangements remained sketchy, expansion of the military relationship was the main subject on the agenda of Crown Prince Fahd's visit to Pakistan in December 1980.<sup>22</sup> The number of soldiers involved and whether all of these would be stationed in Saudi Arabia itself or would instead remain in Pakistan to be deployed in case of need, seemed to be under discussion. Also, of course, the amount of Saudi aid to Pakistan was under review.<sup>23</sup>

The development of an active military relationship with Pakistan would impinge on Saudi Arabia's domestic and external capabilities, depending on its perception of the immediate threat, and where and how the Pakistanis were to be used. The Pakistanis, if they are to be stationed within Saudi Arabia, would supplement manpower in either the Ministry of Defense and Aviation (MODA) or the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG). In this dyad of the Saudi military establishment, each

organization has a different function and reports to a separate Prince; the former under Defense Minister Prince Sultan and the latter under Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah.<sup>24</sup> Clearly, where the Pakistanis go would be important given the small size of the Saudi force. MODA is only 31,000 strong and SANG composition is only 20,000.<sup>25</sup> Even 10,000 well-trained and equipped Pakistani soldiers could be pivotal were there to be any question of internal feuding within various segments of the Royal family (which comprises more than 4,000 Princes), and rival factions.<sup>26</sup>

Other domestic contingencies could result from discontent within the Shia population of Saudi Arabia or from unrest in the expatriate work force. In the presence of a large Palestinian population (approximately 110,000 including Jordanians), a possibility for the radicalization of Saudi Arabia certainly exists. By comparison, Pakistani soldiers, were they to be stationed in Saudi Arabia, could be expected to be apolitical, remaining loyal to their officers.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, with their experience with crowd control operations in Pakistan, they could assist SANG or MODA units in quelling domestic discontent, as the need arose.

Pakistani military units would also be useful in manning the air defense batteries that protect Saudi cities. They could be stationed in Tabuk in the northwest or near the Iraqi border in the northeast; alternatively, in the southwest, they could guard against a Yemeni threat. Pakistani pilots could also be trained to help man the 62 F-15's Saudi Arabia will buy from the United States. (However, due to US third country transfer restrictions, this would require US Government approval.)

The military relationship will also have a significant impact on Pakistan, if of a somewhat different nature. The military relationship will offer Saudi patronage, which will underwrite Pakistani security, and it will offer legitimacy for Pakistan's Islamic credentials--a main theme of its current policy. More specifically the relationship will have the following effects.

• First, it offers a sustained economic boost to a country that is constantly in need of financial assistance. Saudi Arabia could help to offset the costs

of future increases in the price of oil, which in 1980 alone amounted to nearly \$1 billion. Equally important is the prospect of institutionalizing Saudi economic assistance, which has been generous, but sporadic.

• Second, the Saudi connection offers the attractive opportunity to modernize the Pakistani armed forces. By tying Pakistan to Saudi security, General Zia increases the possibilities of securing sophisticated US weapons systems, because of America's declared interest in Saudi stability. Quite apart from the advantages that accrue from updating some of its aged weaponry, there is a benefit to be derived from a feeling within the Pakistan military that they now have access to US military technology. Psychologically, Pakistani policymakers can break out of the "siege mentality" which surrounds their search for ways to increase their military preparedness. Even if the modernization doesn't begin immediately, Pakistan, by training on the complex US equipment that the Saudis will buy, could be ready to use the equipment when they can purchase it themselves.

• Third, it hands the current Pakistani military government a popular issue. Bhutto had sought closer relations with Saudi Arabia and had sanctioned increases in the number of military advisors to be assigned to the Saudi armed forces, but the Saudi monarchy remained suspicious of Bhutto's stated socialist credentials. The exacerbation of regional problems which led to Saudi interest in stronger military ties with Pakistan came after Bhutto's fall from power, and General Zia has been the major beneficiary. As a member of Bhutto's political inner sanctum in the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) put it: "Even God seems to be on Zia's side. He has been very lucky."<sup>28</sup>

• Fourth, from Pakistan's perspective, a Saudi connection increases security not only in military ways, but also in diplomatic and political ways. It serves notice on India and the Soviet Union that although Pakistan may not be a match against either one militarily, it now has a powerful ally with economic and



political clout. The cost of any attack thus becomes higher than it was in the recent past when Pakistan's only friend was a China that was militarily neutralized into inaction by the USSR. Even the informal ties that bind the Islamabad-Riyadh-Washington axis (if such it can be called) has significantly increased the complexity of the strategic calculus of the region.

#### IV

The analysis has thus far centered on the Saudi Arabia-Pakistan military connection; what remains is to examine this relationship in the context of US strategy in Southwest Asia. Any discussion of military strategy must begin with an analysis of the national interest that the strategy must support. Currently, the overriding US national interest in SWA is the continued access to oil for itself and its European and Japanese allies.<sup>29</sup> If there were no competing US national interests in the region, the strategists task would be simplified. Unfortunately, a grim conflict in US interests exists--the Western need for oil is inextricably linked and complicated by the unsolved Arab-Israeli issue. In recognizing this dilemma, former Secretary of Defense Harold Brown stated that:

With the possible exceptions of Western Europe and East Asia, no area of the world retains greater interest or importance for the United States than the Middle East. We are irrevocably committed to the security of Israel and to a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute. At the same time, we and (even more) our allies will continue to depend on Middle East oil for the foreseeable future.<sup>30</sup>

If the commitment to Israeli security were not complication enough, the convergence of "trans-national interests" further constrain the options available to US strategists. For example, the national interest not only of the United States and the Soviet Union, but of all nations of the world, requires that general nuclear war be avoided. This shared "trans-national interest" has led to the development of a mutual, tacit policy of conflict avoidance by the superpowers, apparently based on an assessment of the dangers of escalation inherent in such conflicts. A key strategic

issue raised by the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan is whether or not this action reflects a greater Soviet willingness to challenge the United States militarily. The design of a US military strategy for SWA is constrained and complicated by competing US interests and by transcending global interests. The US-Southwest Asia strategy, then, must assure access to Persian Gulf oil, while at the same time preserving Israeli security and not precipitating a superpower military conflict, which would raise both the stakes and consequences--no easy task.

If the national interests of a nation represent its compelling needs, then the national objectives that a nation selects must lead to the preservation of these interests. These national objectives may be discussed in terms of three fundamental categories of interests that they serve: (1) the survival of the United States with its territory and national values intact; (2) the maintenance and enhancement of the US economy; and (3) the existence of a world order favorable to the United States.<sup>31</sup>

- Survival. US regional objectives in Southwest Asia are deterrence of nuclear war and nuclear nonproliferation.

- Economy. Regional objectives responsive to the maintenance and enhancement of the US standard of living include the continued access to Persian Gulf oil at reasonable prices; the continued free passage of US commercial carriers over international air and sea routes; the expansion of US trade and investment in the region; and the fostering of regional stability.

- World Order. Objectives which would lead to a world order favorable to the United States are the limitation of Soviet influence in the region; the enhancement of US credibility and influence; the reduction or elimination of internal threats to indigenous governments; the prevention of regional conflicts; and the settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute without the alienation of moderate Arab states.

After regional objectives have been derived that are relevant to the safeguarding of US interests in SWA, the next step in the development of a regional military strategy requires that the threat to the most vital US interest in the area be considered. This translates into the threat against the Persian Gulf oil fields. In analyzing this threat, three salient factors will be discussed--criticality, vulnerability, and recuperability. Although new evidence suggests that the United States, given certain conditions, could end oil imports by the turn of the century, it appears that the United States and its allies must rely on Persian Gulf oil, at least through the remainder of this decade. Alan Greenspan, former Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors, stated that it would be a "mistake to assume that the oil crisis is over. . . . However, what would have been unimagined disaster five years ago is now contemplated only as a major crisis, a crisis we have the resources to survive." But this "revisionist" analysis is based on no instability or cut-off of Saudi oil for the next several years.<sup>32</sup>

The oil fields and their collateral installations seem to be as vulnerable as they are critical. The oil fields are susceptible to damage from a wide spectrum of threats ranging from air attacks to sabotage caused by small guerrilla bands which could effectively impede, perhaps even stop the oil flow, by striking at the well heads themselves, at converging pipeline complexes, at pumping stations, and at the terminals. Oil tankers are even vulnerable to attack because of the narrow sea lanes in the Persian Gulf and Straits of Hormuz.<sup>33</sup> To understand the seriousness of the threat to the oil fields, one need only glance at yesterday's headlines. In May 1981, Nayef Hawatmeh, the leader of a hard-line faction of the PLO, threatened to attack the oil fields to cut off Western oil supplies should a new Arab-Israeli War erupt over the missile crisis in Lebanon.<sup>34</sup>

The threat is especially credible against Saudi Arabia given the approximately 2 million immigrants who live and work there. These Egyptians, Yemenis,

and Palestinians would be susceptible to manipulation by terrorists.<sup>35</sup> Couple this with the vulnerability of the Saudi's oil installations because of the geographic concentration of critical equipment and facilities and you have a prescription for disaster. In Vietnam, the United States painfully learned how difficult it was to protect fixed assets such as airfields, POL storage facilities, and administrative headquarters from attack when the enemy held the tactical initiative. It would be no different in Saudi Arabia. This vulnerability is more acute in Saudi Arabia's case, but is typical of the other Gulf oil states. But sabotage or terrorist attack on critical oil facilities are not the only way that the Arab oil flow can be seriously interrupted. Regional conflict or internal domestic disorder can stifle the flow of oil and threaten the economies of the industrial developed nations as the Iran-Iraq War and the Iranian revolution proved. Internal disorder and the accompanying disruption in the flow of oil is a very real possibility in other Persian Gulf states. A former senior State Department official estimates that there is less than one chance in three that the Saudi Royal Family will remain in power through 1990.<sup>36</sup> However, this is not a universally shared view; Saudi Royal family stability is seen by many other observers as significantly better than was the Shah's in Iran.

Recuperability is also a major strategic factor that affects military planning for the defense of oil fields. Examples of civil disasters abound that illustrate the pronounced difficulties of restoring damaged oil facilities to operation. Well fires have burned for virtually a year before being capped. Pumping stations are extremely vulnerable to sabotage, costly to repair, and can disrupt the pipeline flow of oil for 90 days or more. Moreover, the resources and manpower needed to repair damaged oil installations are enormous. John Collins reports that sixteen private companies and three government agencies used 650 workers and significant amounts of equipment just to control a single platform fire in the United States.<sup>37</sup>

It makes little difference how the threat to Persian Gulf oil is viewed. The outlook is grim. The flow of oil, which is currently critical to the United States

and its major allies, can be easily disrupted by small bands of terrorists and the restoration of damaged or destroyed installations would be an expensive and time-consuming project. At the other end of the threat spectrum is the danger of a Soviet incursion into the oil fields, although the escalatory dangers inherent in a direct Soviet military attack should cause them to approach this scenario with caution, particularly in view of the fact the Soviets may not need the oil for their own use. Nonetheless, the Reagan Administration takes this threat seriously as is evident by this statement by Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger:

The Soviet Union has greatly extended its geostrategic reach by establishing military outposts in the Middle East, in Africa, and elsewhere. Soviet footholds in Ethiopia, Yemen, and Afghanistan threaten the vital oil fields of the Middle East, and indeed the peace of the world.<sup>38</sup>

Given the extreme difficulties and low probability of success that confront any military operation that has as its objective either the defense or seizure of the Persian Gulf oil fields, it seems clear that the United States should opt for a national strategy that relies on nonmilitary means to reduce its dependence on foreign oil. The United States should reduce its need for oil from the Persian Gulf by diversifying imports where possible, by energy conservation measures, and by seeking new energy alternatives.<sup>39</sup> An essential element of this national strategy would be the settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute in such a way as to retain the friendship and cooperation of the moderate Arab nations. This preferred nonmilitary national strategy would take time to become effective and might not be successful even if vigorously pursued, so the United States must develop military contingency plans that could be used under conditions of peace, crisis or war to insure the uninterrupted flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to the United States, Japan, and Europe. It is in this strategic context of peace, crisis, and war, against the backdrop of the threat to US interests and objectives that the implications of the emerging Saudi-Pakistani military relationship will be considered.

It seems clear that not only do strategic options vary greatly under conditions of peace, crisis, or conflict, but that a strategist's geopolitical perspective will also impact heavily on his strategic assessments. For example, if Pakistan is viewed as a part of the Indian subcontinent, certain strategic imperatives follow, such as the geopolitical decoupling of the Indian Ocean from the South Asian landmass. This orientation, attributed to the Carter Administration, would deprecate the strategic value of Pakistan or India to US security interests. The Reagan Administration, on the other hand, sees more geostrategic logic in viewing the Indian Ocean Basin as a strategic entity, linking together the littoral states of East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and South Asia.<sup>40</sup> With this maritime orientation, strategic possibilities arise with regard to the Saudi-Pakistani relationship that might otherwise be overlooked. Using the maritime perspective, the interests of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United States converge and the strategic trilogy of Saudi wealth, US military technology, and Pakistani soldiers makes eminent sense in terms of Persian Gulf security.

As the analysis of the threat to US interests in the Persian Gulf suggested, stability in the region generally, and in Saudi Arabia specifically, is key to continued access to oil. The debate between the advocates of increased forward deployed force presence in the region and those who prefer less US force presence (particularly of ground forces) in favor of regional defense arrangements and arms assistance to indigenous armies is relevant to the stability issue. The debate seems to be going in favor of those who prefer reduced US visibility during peacetime. A Congressional Report in 1979 was:

. . . largely supportive of the view that the inherent practical and political limitations on the so-called forward strategy limit its usefulness to the United States and that more subtle and less visible forms of influence are more conducive to the achievement of US objectives.<sup>41</sup>

Certainly, during periods of crisis a more overt US presence is often desirable. The recent stationing of USAF AWAC's in Saudi Arabia in the wake of the Iran-Iraq War is a case in point. Although the decision to establish a new unified command responsible for US military activities in Southwest Asia is some time away from implementation, it does imply a willingness on the part of the United States to station more troops in the Gulf area. For the present, however, US interests in the area must rely on the deterrent effect of the potential of the RDJTF to be projected into the region from the United States, on the US Indian Ocean deployments, and on periodic joint military training exercises conducted in the area.

It is also true that a more visible US military presence in the region during peacetime runs counter to the indigenous political climate, because Saudi leaders, in particular, feel that increased US peacetime presence complicates their relations with some Arab countries because of US relations with Israel and it would appear to draw the Saudis closer to Egypt. Therefore, a military relationship between the Saudis and Pakistan could be in the US national interest, especially if Pakistan were to station combat units in Saudi Arabia.

The value of the Saudi-Pakistan connection during periods of crisis is more ambivalent. However, before we discuss this relationship in terms of US military strategy during international crisis, it is important to say a word about military objectives. Perhaps, the most critical element in the development of options to use military force during a crisis is the proper translation of the national political objectives into military objectives and strategic concepts. If military force is to serve political ends during crisis situations, if the metamorphosis of policy to strategy is to occur, then an early and continuing dialogue between the civilian policymaker and military strategist must take place in terms that both can understand. This critical translation of political objectives into military terms in the context of limited warfare remains the most intransigent political-military problem

since the end of World War II. It seemed completely beyond our grasp in Vietnam. How national policy and military strategy are integrated in the US response to potential crisis in Southwest Asia will be the crucial factor in assuring access to oil.

The RDJTF is the US force that would most likely respond to the military demands of a crisis in Southwest Asia. This immediately raises the question of military relations in the area. What, for example, would be the command relationships among the United States and its naval allies in the Indian Ocean (UK, France, and Australia)? What would be the command and control arrangements among the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan? Other problems also arise to complicate relationships during a crisis. Suppose the crisis involved India and Pakistan, would Saudi Arabia, because of its military relationship, attempt to pressure the United States to assist Pakistan? Alternatively, it could unilaterally resupply Pakistan with weapons and equipment. In either case, a crisis that began in or over Pakistan could spread to Saudi Arabia simply because of its military reliance on Pakistani forces. On the other hand, if the crisis involved Israel, then the Pakistanis would be immediately involved because of their Saudi connection and, not only involved, but probably arrayed against the United States.

If the crisis developed in a way similar to the current missile crisis in Lebanon, then the Pakistani troops in Saudi Arabia, because of their familiarity with internal security operations, could counter the attempts of the PLO to cause trouble among the foreign workers in Saudi Arabia. They could also assist in protecting oil facilities against acts of terrorism, although admittedly the defense of oil facilities is a difficult military problem. This does, however, raise the issue of the consequences of a failure on the part of the Pakistanis to protect the oil installations or to maintain internal security. The effect of operational failure could be serious, putting stress on the diplomatic relations between the two countries, not to mention the risks to regimes involved.



If the crisis situation resulted in a need for additional Pakistani troops and the Pakistanis could not respond, either because of problems in Pakistan such as those described immediately below or for some other reason, the strain on the Saudi Royal family could reach intolerable proportions.

If the crisis involved the Soviet Union, could Afghanistan or India bring decisive diplomatic or military pressure to bear on Pakistan? With Indian involvement (and in the future with the possibility of a Pakistani nuclear device), the issue of nuclear weapons in a regional crisis is raised. Consider a hypothetical scenario in which Pakistani troops are fighting Soviet proxies (either Cubans or East Germans) on the Arabian Peninsula on behalf of the Saudis and a nuclear weapon is used. The stakes are immediately raised to monumental proportions and the possibility of superpower involvement is virtually assured. Now the issue is no longer access to oil, but prevention of nuclear war.

The key variable in considerations of US Southwest Asian strategy during wartime is the Soviet Union. If the Soviet external threat were intensified by an invasion of Iran, the presence of Pakistani soldiers in Saudi Arabia would impact in several ways. First, the Pakistanis could play a role in defending vital military installations in Saudi Arabia; installations that the United States might need if Saudi Arabia asked for our aid. Secondly, assuming the Pakistanis had combat units of divisional size in Saudi Arabia, they could deter countries in the region with a history of hostile relations with Saudi Arabia (Iran, PDRY) from using this opportunity to settle old scores. On the other hand, the Soviet Union could pressure Pakistan to remove their force by increasing military activity on the northwest border area. Thirdly, if a regional war got out of control and the superpowers were engaged in direct combat, it is conceivable that the Pakistanis could fight against the Soviets. A more plausible scenario, however, is one in which the Pakistanis were used as Saudi proxies (US proxies once removed?) to fight against Soviet proxies (Cuban, East

Germans) in a renewal of fighting against the PDRY. As was discussed in the crisis section, this type of operation contains the seeds of a much more serious conflict, involving the superpowers.

## VI

The precise nature of the Saudi-Pakistani relationship, as reported by the media, is unknown. This analysis has suggested that if the Pakistanis were to station up to two combat divisions in Saudi Arabia to shore up the defense establishment there, the effect on US national interests in Southwest Asia would be salutary. The relationship would certainly be advantageous to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan reaps military, political, and psychological benefits as well. In the short term, the enhanced regional stability that would accrue from such a relationship would afford the United States and its allies access to the needed oil, but in the long run, US interests would be better served by nonmilitary means. The extreme vulnerability of the oil fields and the great difficulty of restoring them to operation once damaged points to a preferred policy of oil independence. But until that policy can come to fruition, the United States in peace, crisis, and war must be prepared to respond with military forces.

In peacetime, the use of Pakistani troops in Saudi Arabia would be less provocative than the forward deployment of American soldiers. The combination of Saudi wealth, Pakistani military power, and US military technology can serve the national interests of all three nations by providing a measure of stability to Saudi Arabia, by modernizing Pakistan's armed forces, and by safeguarding the US and Western interest in access to oil.

In a crisis, the Saudi-Pakistani military connection is a mixed blessing that could either serve US interests in SWA or threaten them by providing other nations and terrorist groups with a means to escalate the stakes involved in a crisis. It is uncertain in a crisis situation whether the relationship will be beneficial or

not because the cost-benefit analysis is so scenario dependent. What is more certain, however, is that the Saudi-Pakistani military relationship complicates the strategic environment in the Persian Gulf-Middle East region and carries with it the potential of a crisis anywhere in the area escalating horizontally, involving superpowers and regional states alike, from India to Israel.

The military relationship between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan contains some great benefits not only for each of these countries, but for the United States as well. Its deterrent effect on regional wars on the Arabian Peninsula would be considerable and it provides the United States with military help in the protection of Saudi oil and military installations should the United States be asked to provide military assistance to Saudi Arabia. The Pakistanis are professional soldiers who should be able to increase the military capability of the Saudis. While the Pakistanis would stiffen the Saudi defense during war, the emerging relationship holds greater significance for regional stability through its deterrent effect during peacetime.

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